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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
USCINCENT MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1](#). Syria
- [2](#). Mideast

Key stories in the media:

The three major Hebrew-language newspapers bannered the issue of the fate of the Syrian regime following the "mysterious" suicide of Syrian Interior Minister Ghazi Kanaan on Wednesday. Yediot reported that over the past few weeks, U.S. administration representatives have held talks with senior officials from Arab countries to find out who could replace President Bashar Assad as Syria's leader (the newspaper banners: "U.S.: End of Assad Regime Near"). Maariv bannered Assad's comment to CNN's Christiane Amanpour that he is "not afraid of America," and highlighted his remark in the interview: "We don't think this government in Israel is serious about the peace process. So, in the near future, we don't see any hope. But in the long term, there must be peace. There is no other option." Ha'aretz quoted FM Shalom as saying on Wednesday that he hoped Kanaan's suicide would not make him a scapegoat for Assad. Ha'aretz quoted Shalom as saying: "The Syrians feel the noose tightening around their necks," Shalom said. "The [UN investigator Detlev] Mehlis report is closing in on direct Syrian involvement in [Rafiq] Hariri's murder."

Jerusalem Post led with an AP story about the bloody standoff between Islamic hostage-takers and Russian security forces in the Russian city of Nalchik.

Internal Security Minister Gideon Ezra was quoted as saying in an interview with Jerusalem Post that extreme far-right activists still seek to plan attacks against PM Sharon or the Temple Mount.

Jerusalem Post cited statistics released by the PA, according to which the number of Palestinians killed in internal strife is higher than those killed by the IDF in the first five months of 2005. The ministry points out that Fatah's armed wing, the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, was largely responsible for the continued state of lawlessness and anarchy.

Ha'aretz and Israel Radio reported that Vice Premier Shimon Peres will meet with chief PA negotiator Saeb Erekat at his Tel Aviv offices today to discuss operating procedures for the Rafah border crossing between the Gaza Strip and Egypt. Ha'aretz quoted a diplomatic source in Jerusalem as saying that Israel has not yet taken a position on a plan prepared by Egypt and the World Bank, according to which the PA and Egypt would jointly operate the crossing. Israel Radio quoted Jibril Rajoub, the PA's National Security Adviser, as saying that Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz will travel to Egypt to discuss the border issue with senior Egyptian officials.

Hatzofe reported that citing anarchy in the PA, Israel has secretly allowed the Palestinian forces in Tulkarm to carry Kalashnikov rifles.

Hatzofe reported that the "National Palestine Solidarity Committee" has written to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, demanding that the U.S. release Professor Sami Al-Arian and three other persons, who are on trial in Florida for supporting terror.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai was quoted as saying in an interview held in Kabul with Yediot's Orly Azolai that he would be pleased to meet Sharon.

Jerusalem Post reported that despite an American Jewish Congress press release on Tuesday saying that Pakistan will accept aid from Israel and American Jewish groups, Jerusalem still has not heard from Islamabad whether it is interested in Israeli assistance.

Ha'aretz printed a Reuters story, according to which some U.S. Protestant churches are turning their backs on the idea of dumping investments in companies profiting from Israel's West Bank occupation.

Maariv lengthily reviewed "Kill! Kill! Kill!," a book published in Paris by former Staff Sergeant Jimmy Massey, a 12-year Marine veteran, in which he accuses the U.S. of genocide in Iraq. Maariv notes that American publishers "did not hurry" to print Massey's book.

Alexander Haig, who served as the late U.S. president Richard Nixon's chief of staff during the Yom Kippur War, was quoted as saying in an interview with Maariv that U.S. intelligence "failed disgracefully" at the time.

Leading media cited the Health Ministry's assessment that 3,000 Israelis could die from avian influenza if the epidemic reaches the country.

Ha'aretz published the results of a survey conducted early this week among Labor Party members by the Amanet Group's Dialogue Institute:

- "Should Labor quit the cabinet by the end of 2005, or remain in it until the 2006 elections?" Stay: 76.5 percent; quit: 15.8 percent; 7 percent were undecided.

Maariv printed the results of a TNS/Teleseker Polling Institute survey conducted this week:

- "If elections were held today, whom would you vote for?" (in Knesset seats - in parentheses: results of 2003 Knesset elections): Likud (headed by Sharon): 38 (40); Labor (headed by Peres): 24 (22); Shinui: 9 (15); National Union 8 (4); Yisrael Beiteinu: 6 (3); Meretz: 6 (6); National Religious Party: 4 (6); United Torah Judaism: 5 (5); Arab parties: 8 (8).

1. Syria:

Summary:

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "Israel will try to avoid being drawn into the crisis of its northern neighbor."

Senior Middle East affairs analyst Zvi Bar'el wrote on page one of Ha'aretz: "If any government directive to eliminate Hariri existed, Kanaan certainly knew about it."

Arab affairs correspondent Jackie Hoogie wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv: "Hariri and Kanaan have taken to their graves many secrets related to the 29-year-long Syrian chapter in Lebanon."

Washington correspondent Nathan Guttman wrote in conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "Israel, say sources close to the issue, is pleased with the status quo and with a situation in which Assad is under constant measured pressure."

Block Quotes:

I. "Assad Is Good For the Golan"

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote in

independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (October 14): "The United States, which in the past keenly supported the talks with Syria, has let it go in recent years. In the present state of affairs, Assad is good for the Golan and he also preserves the silence on the northern border. He conducts his war with Israel indirectly, by sponsoring Hamas and other terror organizations' headquarters in Damascus.... Israel will try to avoid being drawn into the crisis of its northern neighbor. It will try to delay any negotiations on the Golan Heights for as long as possible, but it will also be careful not to contribute to any serious upheavals in Damascus that could endanger the quiet on its own northern border."

II. "Who Benefits From Kanaan's Death?"

Senior Middle East affairs analyst Zvi Bar'el wrote on page one of Ha'aretz (October 14): "[Syrian Interior Minister Ghazi] Kanaan knew the history of Syrian control in Lebanon, under both the late president Hafez Assad and his son Bashar, and carried the facts in his head and in his documents. Bashar appointed him interior minister and internal security chief and if any government directive to eliminate Hariri existed, Kanaan certainly knew about it.... Will Kanaan's death affect the probe of Hariri's murder? That depends on where the inquiry stands.... If the commission intends to question senior Syrian officials in the next two weeks on the basis of information from Kanaan, it may now hit a brick wall, as those suspects can pass the blame to the dead Kanaan."

III. "Assad's Gain"

Arab affairs correspondent Jackie Hoogie wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv (October 14): "It is widely believed that Ghazi Kanaan was the most serious threat to Assad among the Alawites.... Syria withdrew from Lebanon half a year ago; since then, the Lebanese scene has not stopped bleeding from bombings and bodies. Hariri and Kanaan have taken to their graves many secrets related to the 29-year-long Syrian chapter in

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Lebanon. The way they disappeared teaches that the presence in Lebanon may have been Syrian, but the tragedy was of a Greek nature."

IV. "Solving the Riddle of Bashar Assad"

Washington correspondent Nathan Guttman wrote in conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (October 14): "The lack of alternative to Bashar Assad leads the U.S. to a policy of preferring 'behavior change,' as a senior administration official put it, instead of 'regime change.' The U.S. is looking to coerce him into cooperating, rather than trying to overthrow him. The Israeli view, as it is presented by diplomats to the U.S. administration, is rather surprising. While publicly Israel criticizes the regime in Syria, in private Israeli representatives have made it clear to the U.S. that regime change of any kind in Damascus is not in Israel's interest. Israel, say sources close to the issue, is pleased with the status quo and with a situation in which Assad is under constant measured pressure. Just enough pressure to make him cautious about his moves, but not too much so as not to push him into a corner that might lead him to take desperate actions against Israel, either in the Golan Heights or along the Lebanese border."

----- 12. Mideast: -----

Summary:

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "An Arab country, Qatar, is helping to strengthen the bonds between the State of Israel and its Arab minority."

Block Quotes:

"Qatar's Stadium"

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (October 14): "The USD 6-million donation offered by Qatar to the municipality of [the Israeli-Arab town of] Sakhnin will be enough to complete construction of the local stadium, with change left over. This is the stadium that Prime Minister Ariel Sharon promised to build a year and a half ago, after Sakhnin's soccer team won the State Cup. The donation will turn the

stadium into a unique Arab-Israeli project, the fruit of open cooperation, not between Israeli and Arab individual business people but rather between governments.... If in the past, the popular slogan spoke of Israeli Arabs as a bridge between the country and the Arab states, it now appears that the established order has been turned on its head: an Arab country, Qatar, is helping to strengthen the bonds between the State of Israel and its Arab minority. The need of Israeli-Arab institutions for aid from Arab states mainly because of their low ranking on the Israeli government's list of priorities should not diminish the significance of Qatar's action.... In its games at home and abroad, Bnei Sakhnin [the town's soccer team] represents Israel, not Qatar or any other Arab state, and its fans are Israeli citizens. This is how they are seen in Arab countries, whose attitude toward Israel is determined not by Israel's policy regarding its Arab population but rather by its policy toward the Palestinians in the territories. This innovation, where for the first time ever an Arab country has taken a clear interest in Israeli citizens based on apolitical, altruistic interests rather than political ones, brings with it an additional blessing. It obligates Israel, at least in terms of Qatar, to make amends on its policies, not only toward the Palestinians but also toward the Israeli Arabs."

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